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CHILDREN *of* ITALY

By
M. DOROTHY
MAWDSELEY



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CHILDREN *of* ITALY



*Everybody helped gather the big purple
clusters of grapes*

CHILDREN OF ITALY

By
M. DOROTHY MAWDSLEY

Drawings by
RUTH KELLOGG ✓



THOMAS S. ROCKWELL COMPANY
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1931

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CHAPTER I

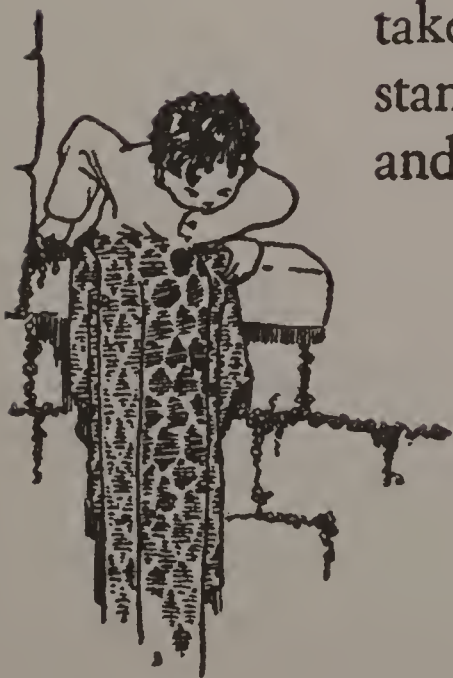
THE CITY OF THE LILY

UMBERTO RUCELLAI'S father kept a jewelry shop in Florence, a lovely city in the northern part of Italy. The yellow river Arno flows through the pleasant Italian city. On each side of the sluggish river big stone houses line the banks, and here and there bridges let the people cross from one part of the city to the other. One of these bridges is called the Ponte Vecchio, which means in Italian, the old bridge. It would seem very funny to us, for all along it is crowded with little shops that mostly belong to jewelers. Rucellai's shop was one of these. The little windows that faced the street were filled with brooches, rings, and chains. There were pink coral necklaces and brooches that had come from Naples, blue turquoise pins shaped like the Florentine lily, and lovely pieces of mosaic from Venice.

Every day Umberto looked from the back of the little shop, where the workroom was, down on the water below. When the river was low he could see the great streaks which the water had made across the lower part of the houses.

Umberto lived near the bridge on a street called Via de' Bardi. It was a narrow street that made a sharp turn from one end of the bridge and climbed a high hill. He would walk along it till he came to the big stone house which he knew was his and then climb up three stories to the apartment where he lived. There his mother and his little sister, Urbana, were always glad to see him again. His mother had her black hair parted in the middle and drawn around her head in a big braid. She had a high round forehead, straight eyebrows, eyes that were oval shaped, and the kindest smile in the world.

When he was smaller, his mother used to take him to the Pitti Art Gallery, and he would stand before a beautiful round picture of Mary and the little Christ Child. His mother used



to tell him that the artist who had painted it was called Raphael, and that he had painted it on the top of a wine barrel. Umberto always liked the picture of Mary and the Child because when his mother put a shawl over her head she looked like the Madonna. His little sister was younger than he was; she was only seven; and she wasn't much fun anyway, because she was only a girl. But his mother, who was so calm and sweet always, never hurried and never was cross, was a wonderful mother for a little boy to have.

Of course, he was fond of his father, too. Often the big Rucellai took the little boy by the hand while he went about to talk to some friends. How their white teeth shone in their dark faces when they found something to laugh at! And they often laughed, for Italians are usually happy people. When Americans or Englishmen talk, they only talk with their voices; but Italians use their whole bodies. From down below little Umberto used to watch them throwing out their hands or shrugging their shoulders as they talked; or he watched the changing expressions on their faces as they

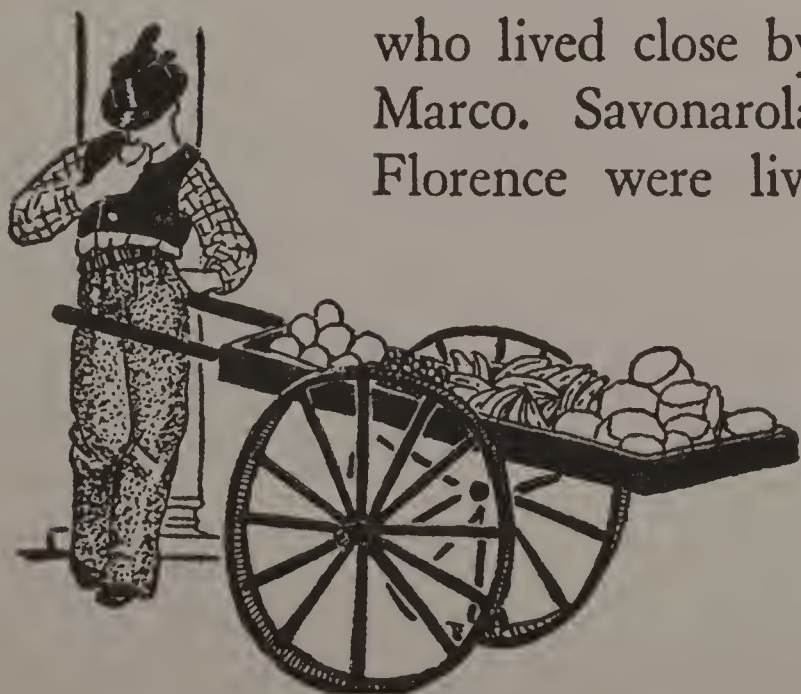
listened to the speaker. "*Per Bacco!*" someone would cry. "*Ebbene!*" or "*Basta!*"

Often these conversations took place over glasses of wine in a little *trattoria*, which we would call a restaurant. Then Umberto was allowed to have some wine mixed with water. Plain water wasn't thought to be good for little boys, and Umberto used to pretend that he really didn't have water in his glass at all, but just wine like the men.

Umberto's father, like all the Florentines, was proud of his city. He loved to take his little son by the hand and tell him stories about its history as they walked through the streets. Perhaps they would go to the Piazza della Signoria, which is a large open space like a public square, and Rucellai would stop over a bronze plate on the pavement.

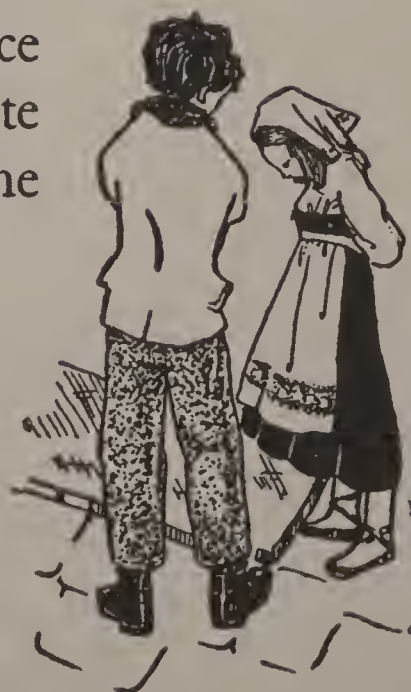
"Here," he said "the Florentines burned Savonarola."

Then he told Umberto of the good monk who lived close by in the Monastery of San Marco. Savonarola thought that the people of Florence were living wicked lives, and he



preached to them to repent of their sins. After a while the people listened to him, and they brought all their pictures, their jewelry, their false hair, and their fine clothes, and made a huge bonfire in the middle of the Piazza della Signoria. But after a time they became tired of living without their old pleasures and they turned against the good monk. Then he and two others were shut up in the Palazzo Vecchio, or Old Palace. They were put way up in the tower, where Savonarola could see only through one small window. He stood at that window all the day and looked out over the city that he loved so well. And after a trial they found him guilty of many crimes that he had never done, and took him out to burn in the square. When it was too late, they were sorry for this deed and they made the mark in the pavement, so that they might never forget where he died.

Umberto and his father went many times to the two great picture galleries of the city: the Uffizi and the Pitti. These galleries were once the palaces of nobles. They are on opposite sides of the river Arno, at either end of the



Ponte Vecchio. People can cross from one gallery to the other by a passage which goes along the top of the bridge, directly over the shop of Umberto's father. There is no city in the world which has so many great pictures painted by its own artists. Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, and Michael Angelo were all famous painters who lived in Florence.

Long ago the city of Florence was ruled by the family of the Medici. "Medici" really means Doctor, and the family had been in various trades before they became rich. It was even said that the three balls which were in their coat of arms really meant pills which the family had sold when they were chemists.

Until less than a hundred years ago all the cities of Italy were separately ruled. They conquered the surrounding country, and often made war on neighboring cities. Florence used to fight against Pisa and Siena, other cities not far away; and Siena fought long wars with Genoa. Florence really was a republic, but the Medici family got control of the government. They were very interested in sculpture

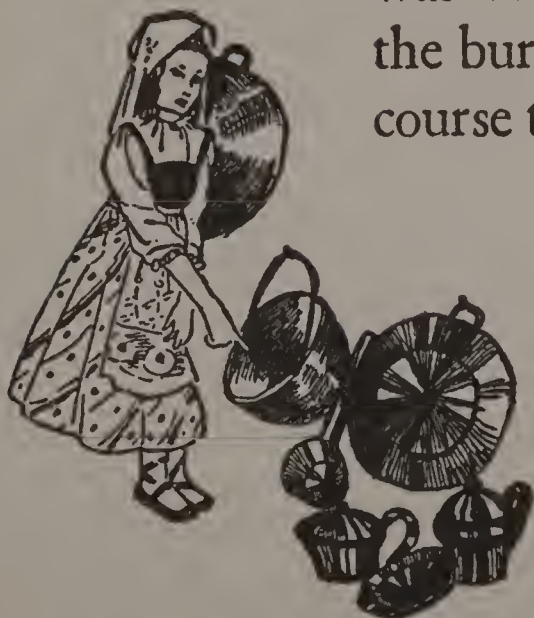
and painting and became patrons of many famous sculptors and artists. They invited them to live in Florence and gave them money enough so that they could always work at their art and would never find it necessary to go elsewhere. The Medici were buried in the church of San Lorenzo, and Michael Angelo made two beautiful statues to go over their tomb.



CHAPTER II

HOUSEKEEPING IN TOWN

MEANWHILE, Urbana was pattering around at home, watching Maria in the kitchen. It was always lots of fun to watch the cooking. The place for cooking took almost the whole of one wall. It was built of bricks and there were three little places where Maria could put pans to cook the food. The fire was made with charcoal. Maria would put a little paper and a few sticks on top of the grating, and when they had caught fire, she would sprinkle little pieces of charcoal in the middle. She could open a little door at the front of the stove to help make a draft if the fire didn't want to burn. Often to make a quicker fire, she fanned it through the opening. When it was burning nicely, she put her pan right on the burning charcoal and did her cooking. Of course the bottom of the pan got very black, but



that couldn't be helped. All the food had to be either boiled or fried in big pans made of copper, so heavy that little Urbana could hardly lift them. The inside of the pans was finished with tin, because if food is left in copper it becomes poisonous.

Sometimes this coat of tin wore off the older pans, and then Maria had to be very careful to pour out the food as soon as it was cooked. When she had time, she took the pan to Giacomo in order to have it retinned. To enter Giacomo's little shop, one went down several steps below the level of the street. As the door opened, it rang a bell in the back of the shop, and Giacomo would come out knowing he had a customer. Urbana liked to go there with Maria. There was always a soft gloom through which the reddish light of the copper shone faintly, and while Maria showed her pan to Giacomo, Urbana would touch softly the *brocche* and *casserole*, the pitchers and pans, which were piled everywhere about, watching the way the tip of her finger made a little spot of mist on the bright surface.

Sometimes Maria took Urbana with her when she went to market. In the Mercato Vecchio, the Old Market, the women from the country sat in front of piles of vegetables, fruits, or fowls. If the sun was very hot they sometimes had cabbage leaves on their heads as sunshades. The chickens were all alive and were tied together by their feet in groups of about half a dozen. They lay on their sides, hot and thirsty in the blazing sun. Maria pointed out the chicken that she wanted, and it lifted the blue lid of its eye and uttered a feeble squawk or two as the woman pulled it out from among the others. Then all the rest started to flutter and squawk. For a few minutes there was an uproar, until the uselessness of trying to move with their legs tied made all the hens settle down again into a heap of ruffled feathers only stirred by their breathing.

All this time the countrywoman was pointing out to Maria that the hen she had chosen was a beautiful one, young and fat. But now Maria pretended that she didn't like it since she had seen it closer. She really wanted it all the

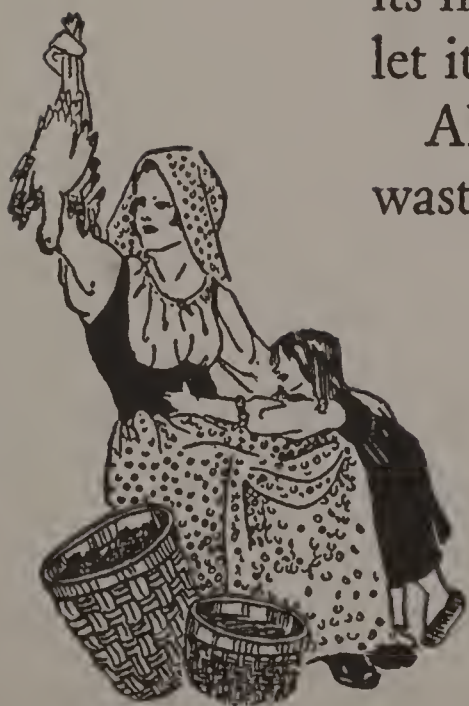


*The women from the country sat in front of
piles of vegetables and fruits*

time, and the woman knew she did, but the Italians like to take time in making a bargain. Finally the woman offered the hen to Maria for about twice as much as it was worth—saying that she was only setting so low a price as a great favor. Then Maria threw up her hands and said that such a price would ruin her, that for her part she did not think the chicken worth so much—and she named a sum, which was about half what she expected to give.

Then, for a few minutes they both argued loudly; the countrywoman saying that to sell at such a price would mean starvation for her children, and Maria vowing that she wouldn't give a cent more. Every now and then the countrywoman came down in her price, and Maria offered a little more, till finally both reached the price which they had known from the beginning was a fair rate for the hen. Then Maria agreed to take it, and the woman wrung its neck there and then, declaring that she had let it go at a great bargain.

All this would seem to an American a great waste of time, but the countrywoman would



not have liked Maria to come to her price too soon. Both of them enjoyed the argument, and if Maria took a long time buying her chicken, the countrywoman liked her all the better for it.

On another day Maria took Urbana to the flower market. Here the countrywomen stood with their big baskets of flowers. In the bright sunshine the masses of blue, pink, and yellow flowers looked very gay. Nearly always Maria bought some flowers for the house and sometimes she let Urbana choose them. All Italians like flowers and keep big bowls of them in every room in the house. The name of Florence comes from the Italian word for flower. The city has chosen the lily as its sign.

In one corner of the flower market straw hats were sold. The countrywomen who sold the hats had heaps of straw by their side, and while they waited for trade, they were busy braiding it into long ropes to be sewn later into more hats. All the way to the market they had walked with the baskets of hats on their heads and with their fingers busily braiding straw. All but the rich people carry things on their heads in

Italy. The women, especially, can carry baskets of vegetables and fruit, or jars of water, or great heaps of clothes, on their heads without ever letting them fall. They stand very straight and sway their bodies when the road is rough, but they keep their heads still. Thus they are able to carry a heavy load on their heads and use their hands for doing something else. Sometimes they carry things in their hands, too, but usually they are leading a child or busy knitting or braiding straw.

At the hat market were hats of all sizes and of all shapes. One of the women had arranged hers in a row so that the biggest was at the top, and the ones below got smaller and smaller till there were tiny hats just the size for dolls. Maria let Urbana try some of the small ones on her doll until she found one that fitted it exactly.



CHAPTER III

HOLIDAYS IN FLORENCE

ON THE Saturday before Easter, Urbana's father took her to the cathedral. The people of Florence are very proud of their beautiful Duomo, or cathedral, which is a large and beautiful church built from marble of many colors. It is called Santa Maria del Fiore, which means Saint Mary of the Flower. Another beautiful church in this city is named after the lily of Florence.

The big dome of the cathedral can be seen from all over the city. When it was built many years ago, no one was quite sure how to build a dome. All the churches for a long time had been finished with a tower, and people were afraid that a dome might fall down on the building and destroy it. The man who built it was called Brunelleschi, and there is a statue of him near the church, looking up at his

dome. To make the dome still safer, the Florentines bound it with great chains. A few years ago an earthquake pulled some of these apart. It was thought then that, after such a shaking, it might fall, but it had been built so well that it was perfectly safe.

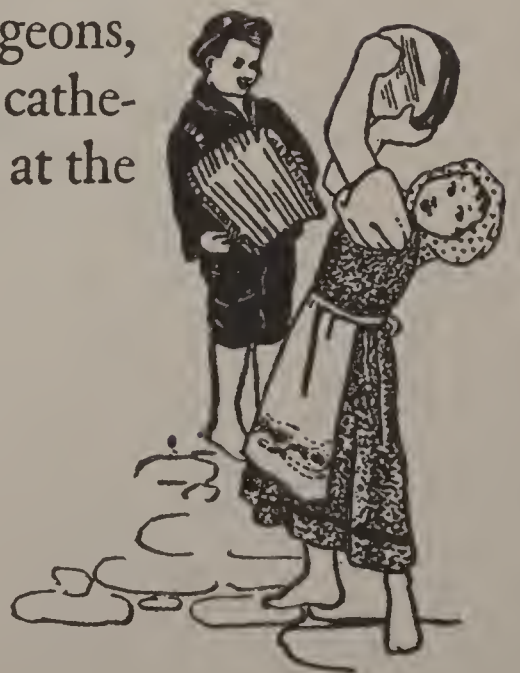
Near the Duomo is the baptistery where the babies are baptized. The baptistery has wonderful bronze doors. When it was being built, the city had a competition to see who could make the most beautiful design for the doors. The man who won was called Ghiberti, and his doors were so beautiful that the judges said they were beautiful enough to be the doors of Heaven.

But Urbana had not been brought to the cathedral to see these things. She had been brought because it was the Festa of the Carro, which means the Holiday of the Chariot.

The Florentines have many festas, and this is one of the most exciting. Years and years ago a Florentine called Pazzi went to the Holy Land and brought back a light from the altar in the church in Jerusalem. He had a long, hard

journey bringing it home. To keep the light from going out, while on the way, he often rode facing the tail of his horse to shelter the flame from the wind. When he got to Florence he lit the lamp on the altar in the big cathedral from the light that he had brought. It has never gone out since that time. Every year since then the people of Florence have had a holiday to celebrate the bringing of the light.

A carro, or chariot, is drawn by four white oxen with gilded horns, their backs covered with red cloths fringed with gold. The chariot is so high that all the street wires have to be taken down to let it pass. It stops before the cathedral doors which are wide open. Exactly at noon a toy dove comes down a long wire from the altar with a light in its mouth. It touches the fireworks on the chariot and they go off while the people shout with joy that Lent is over. Then suddenly the big bells in the Campanile boom out, then other bells ring, and everyone is happy. Hundreds of pigeons, which have been sitting quietly on the cathedral ledges, flutter into the air, frightened at the



noise. But inside the cathedral the people watch to see how the little dove goes back to the altar. They think that if it goes back safely, there will be a good harvest, but if it stops on the way back, the next year will be poor.

When some of the fireworks have gone off, the carro moves on to the street where the Pazzi family live. The rest of the fireworks are let off there, to honor them for bringing the altar light to Florence.

Another festa is held on Assumption day in August. It is called the *Giorno dei Grilli*, or day of the crickets. Before daybreak the children go to the big Cascine gardens on the banks of the Arno, and have breakfast there on the grass. Then they play till evening. Before they come home, they try to catch some crickets in the grass. Each child has brought cages to put them in. The cages have a little piece of wood at the top and bottom, held together by little wires like a bird cage. Some of the prettier ones are bell-shaped and just have wood at the bottom. When the children have caught a *grillo*, they pull out one of the wires to let it

in the cage; then they put the wire in again and take the cricket home. They feed it with bits of lettuce leaf and the cricket sings to them.

As well as the big Cascine gardens, Urbana had the Boboli gardens to play in. These are beautiful gardens near the Pitti palace. There is a lovely path between tall evergreen trees where Urbana used to walk holding tight to Maria's hand. She looked at the trees to one side and saw a white marble statue; then a little further down there was one on the other side, then again, one on this side, and so on, all the way down the walk. The white statues were very beautiful against the dark green trees.



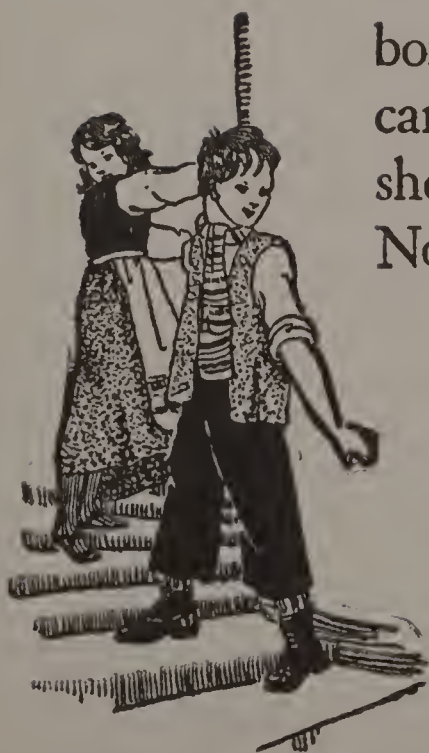
CHAPTER IV

HOUSEKEEPING IN THE COUNTRY

ONE spring little Umberto fell ill. His father and mother were worried about him.

"The *poverino*, poor little one, will not get better in town," they said. "We shall have to take him to the country."

Umberto's mother had been a country girl from the district of Pisa, and they decided that he should visit his little cousins there. Pisa is a small town on the same river as Florence, but nearer the sea. In olden days it used to be a great seaport and fought long wars with the people of Florence and Genoa. To keep out its enemies by sea, it used to close its harbor with a great chain, and once the Genoese carried off a part of the chain to their city to show that they had defeated the Pisans in war. Now Pisa is a quiet place, and usually people



go there only to see its famous leaning tower. No one knows now whether the tower was once built straight and got crooked because it was built on marshy ground, or whether it was built crooked in the first place. It is a big round tower, very white, and it stands near the cathedral and the Baptistery which are also built of white marble.

As the train pulled into Pisa, Umberto could see the three buildings from the window. He had often heard his mother talk about the leaning tower, and he could hardly wait for the train to stop so that he could go to see it. Some of his little cousins were there to meet him with his uncle who was his mother's brother. They all went to the tower.

There is a staircase inside the tower by which one can climb round and round to the top. The children found that when they were on the side which was leaning toward the ground, the slant of the steps pushed them against the outside wall; but on the other side the slant pushed them against the inside wall. It all felt very odd, and they gave little shrieks as each new

turn of the steps seemed to toss them first to one side and then to the other. Here and there they could look out of narrow windows to see how high they had climbed. At last they came out on the roof and saw, far away beneath them, the town of Pisa, the winding river Arno, and the flat plains of farm land stretching toward the sea.

When they came down again, they went into the cathedral. Umberto's mother made them look at the big bronze lamp that hung from the ceiling. She told them that hundreds of years ago a great man of Pisa, called Galileo, noticed the lamp swing back and forth after it had been lit. He counted how many times it swung, and how long it took to go from one side to the other. Then he tried experiments to see if other things hung up like the lamp would swing the same way, and he found that they did. From these experiments he made the laws of pendulums. Later still, other men learned to make clocks because they knew these laws that Galileo had discovered. Galileo became a famous man. He invented the telescope

and with it made many discoveries about the stars. He spent many years of his life in Florence because the great family of the Medici were friendly to him. He is buried there in the church of Santa Croce.

Next, the children went into the Baptistery. It is built in such a way that it has a wonderful echo. While they were there, some visitors gave their guide a lira to sing a few notes, some high and some low. These all came back repeated from the roof, blending like a chord from a big organ.

Altogether, it was a wonderful day, and for Umberto it was only the beginning of some wonderful months in the country. It was behind a team of big white oxen that he rode to his uncle's farm. They drew the cart by a big yoke about their necks. Round their horns and over their eyes dangled little strips of colored cloth which kept the flies from bothering them. Umberto's Uncle Giovanni was a *contadino*; that is, he had a small farm. He grew some wheat, some Indian corn, beans, grapes for making wine, and a few mulberry,

olive, and fig trees. Umberto was never tired of watching what was done both inside the house and out in the fields.

There were many children in his Uncle's home, and one was a tiny baby. Like all Italians, Umberto loved babies, and he liked to see it put into its clothes. An Italian baby does not wear long clothes like ours, but is wound in bands of cloth which prevent it from kicking and reaching out with its hands. To wrap it up, his aunt put the baby's arms close to its sides, took a long linen roll, and then, holding one end of the bandage tight, turned the baby over and over in her lap till the bandage reached its feet. Then she gave the linen a sharp pull, bent it back over the feet and fastened it. The baby probably got a little dizzy while this was going on, for it didn't try to struggle, and once it was bound up, it couldn't move at all. Sometimes, when his aunt was busy, she hung the baby up like a little Indian papoose.

The family had three meals a day. In the morning the men went out to work without eating anything till about nine o'clock. Then



*She turned the baby over and over in her lap
until the bandage reached its feet*

they came in for a breakfast of *pollenta*, a porridge made out of Indian corn, and a drink made of coffee mixed with chicory. At noon they had big bowls of vegetable soup called *minestrone*; and at night they had bread or *pollenta* fried in olive oil. They ate very little meat, but they sometimes had salted herrings, and always there was fruit from the trees on the farm, or perhaps figs which were dried by stringing them in long rows from the roof, or by exposing them to the sun, flattened out on mats. Instead of water, they drank wine.

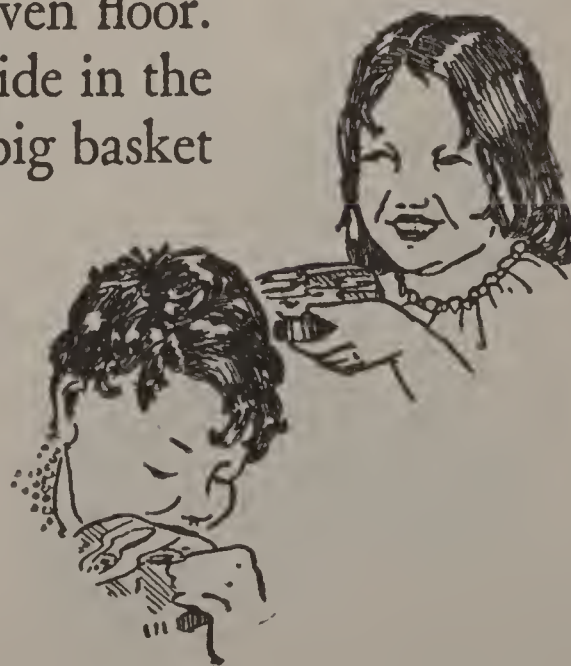
If the children were hungry between meals, they were given pieces of dark bread with some olive oil spread over it. The Italians use olive oil, which is cheaper and easier to get than butter, both to spread on their bread and in cooking. The olive oil was made from the olives which had grown on his Uncle Giovanni's trees, and the bread was made by his aunt from flour which had been made out of wheat grown in his fields. The miller who ground the flour had kept some of it as pay for grinding, and his uncle had brought the rest home.



His aunt kept the flour in a carved chest. There she also put the bread to rise when she was making it. She did not use yeast, but each week she kept back from her baking a piece of dough about the size of her hand. This she marked with the sign of the cross and put back into the flour chest to mix with the next week's baking. The piece of dough made the bread rise just as if yeast had been mixed with it, and each week a piece of dough had been kept back like that in the old chest for more than a hundred years.

His aunt cooked over three little charcoal fires just as Maria did in Florence, but to bake bread she had a brick oven. His uncle used to keep all the prunings of his olive trees and his vines, and these were used to light a fire inside the oven. Then the bread, shaped like large fat pancakes, was put into the oven beside the fire. Sometimes, when Umberto turned the loaves over, he saw little sticks stuck to the bottom, which had come from the oven floor.

The family washing was done outside in the river. His aunt put the clothes in a big basket



and then walked down to the water with the basket on her head. It did not seem to bother her to carry things on her head, and although the basket was big, she did not need to hold it with her hands to keep it steady. There were always other women washing their clothes at the river. They knelt down on the bank and spread their clothes in the stream. Then they beat them against the stones with a big flat stick. Afterwards, the clothes were laid on the grass to dry. The sun made them beautifully white. Then they were folded and carried home again in the basket on his aunt's head.

The water that was used for the house came from a little well. His aunt had a copper *brocca* for carrying the water. The *brocca* looked like a jar; it held just about a pail of water, but the narrow top kept the water from spilling out when she walked home with it on her head. Sometimes, one of the men got the water, but he carried two *brocche*, one hung at either end of a wooden yoke on his shoulders.



CHAPTER V

IN THE FIELDS

THE greatest fun for the little city boy was to go out into the fields and see how his uncle and the other farmers did their work.

Umberto's uncle had quite a big wheat field—almost eleven acres, or five *hectares*, as they call it. Fields in Italy would seem very small in America. There are so many people in Italy that each one can have only a little land. Each farmer raises just enough wheat for his own family to use. He does not raise it to sell, as the American farmers do on their great western wheat farms.

On the evening of Saint John's Day, which they call in Italy, the day of San Giovanni, and which comes on the twenty-fourth of June, all the children went out into the wheat field. Some of the children had little oil lamps and some had candles in their hands. They all car-

ried little crosses made of olive twigs. As they walked through the fields, they sang a little song asking San Giovanni to bless the wheat so that it would give a hundred grains for one. All around them the fireflies flashed in and out among the wheat, and to the parents watching from the house, the children's torches looked like larger fireflies.

When the wheat was ripe, Umberto's uncle cut it with machinery much like that used in America except that it was smaller. But some of the other *contadini* who were poorer cut the grain by hand. All the grain had been cut by hand when his uncle was a boy.

On these farms the men went into the fields, gathered a bunch of grain in one hand and cut it off with a sickle, which is a long curved knife. After that they pulled out a few stalks and used them to tie around the others. Then they dropped these and cut off another bunch till the whole field was done.

Meanwhile, on the courtyard next the house, a thin paste made of clay had been rubbed over the cracks between the stones lest the ants

should creep through and carry off the grains of wheat. The men now brought the sheaves to a hollowed-out log on this threshing floor. With their hands they rubbed the wheat out of the heads that were on the straw used to tie the sheaf together; then they beat the head of the sheaf against the log so that most of the grain fell out. They then threw the sheaf to the women who stood by a bench where they beat it with a short stick so as to get out the rest of the wheat. The wheat fell down on the threshing floor, and the little sheaves of straw were stacked to make food for the cattle.

Next, the chaff had to be taken out of the wheat. At the opposite end of the place where the wheat lay, the men hung a white sheet to keep the grain from scattering. Then, in the evening, when a steady breeze was blowing, they picked the wheat from the clay-covered court in big wooden shovels and threw it up into the air. "Swish!" went the wheat up into the air; "Pt-pt-pt!" the grains struck against the sheet at the end. The chaff shone silver in the moonshine, and the cleaned wheat fell into



golden heaps on the courtyard. It was then gathered and stored away for later use.

The wine making was even more fun. Men, women, and children went up and down the rows of grapes cutting off the big purple clusters with knives or shears.

Baskets stood between the rows—big baskets for the grown-up people and little baskets for the children. When the baskets were full, they carried them to big wooden vessels shaped like milk-cans and called *bigoncie*. When these were filled, they were taken to little carts drawn by oxen. The children climbed on behind and away they all went to the farm house.

One by one, the *bigoncie* were emptied into a big vat which held about three hundred gallons. Then every day someone pressed down the grape skins which rose to the top. Sometimes one of the men took off his shoes and stockings and trampled them down.

Then, too, Umberto saw the men making olive oil. When the olives were turning black on the silvery-green olive trees, men climbed the trees to pick them. The picking began in



*It did not seem to bother them to carry heavy
baskets on their heads*

November, but the olives kept on ripening till January, when the picking season ended.

After being picked, the olives were spread out on the floor for about a week. Then they were ground. The grinder was run by one of the white oxen which went round and round turning the wheel. The olives were placed on a big stone slab and the grinder crushed the meat around them, although it was not set low enough to crush the pit inside. The crushed pulp was then placed in bags and these were taken off to a press which forced out the olive oil. The oil was run into huge *conche*, or earthenware jars. Then the pulp was ground again, and from this a poorer oil was made. The first oil was used for cooking and spreading on bread; the poorer oil was used for burning in the lamps.

But the most interesting things on the farm were the silkworms. Umberto's aunt kept a few which were fed from the leaves of the mulberry trees. In the early spring tiny black worms hatched from the little gray eggs which looked like seeds. As soon as they were born,



his aunt held young mulberry leaves over them, and the little worms at once crawled on and began to eat.

The silkworms were kept on pieces of matting made of woven cane. In one corner of the room where they were, his aunt placed a big frame with four legs. All along this frame there were little holes where one could put pegs to support the pieces of wood on which the matting lay. At first, when the worms were quite small, one mat held them all; but as they grew bigger, they were spread out on more and more mats, till finally all the frame was full.

Every day, fresh mulberry leaves were spread over the mats. The healthy worms at once left the old leaves and climbed on to the new; but the sickly worms did not try to leave the old leaves, and were thrown away with them. The worms ate all the soft parts of the leaves, and left all the little veins, so that the leaves they had eaten looked like fine pieces of lace.

As the worms grew bigger, they grew too big for their skin. Then they stopped eating

for a short time and remained very still with their front feet in the air. The old skin cracked and fell off, and the worm then began to eat again.

Every time the worm lost its skin it became a little whiter, till finally the worms were fat white things about two inches long. As they ate the leaves, the sound of their rustling among them was like the sound of rain. It was lucky that as the worms had grown, the mulberry trees had grown bigger leaves, for now the worms ate them very fast. Then suddenly they stopped eating again, and Umberto's aunt said:

"Now they are ready to make their cocoons!"

After the worms had stopped eating, they had begun to shrink into themselves, so that now they were only half as long as they had been. Umberto's aunt held little twigs over them and the worms climbed on. Then she carried them where she had some *gorse*, which is a little bush that looks much like an evergreen tree except that it is very small and has yellow flowers. The worms left the twigs to crawl on the gorse.

Finally, all the worms were on the gorse.

They moved about it for a while till they found a good place for their cocoons; then once more they raised their heads in the air and were still.

Then they began to move their heads from side to side, and Umberto saw that they were leaving a fine silk thread as they moved. First they threw out a few long threads to make themselves fast in the gorse; then they began to wrap the thread around themselves. Before very long, Umberto could see the worm only faintly through a thin silk mesh; then the worm disappeared altogether. How pretty it was then to see the gorse all hung with little egg-shaped balls of white and yellow silk!

When all the worms had made their cocoons, Umberto helped his aunt to pick them. Most of the cocoons were then taken into the market, but a few were kept that there might be eggs for next year.

What wonderful months Umberto had spent in the country! He was now quite strong again and it was time for him to go home. He was glad to go back to his mother and father, but how sorry he was to leave the farm!



CHAPTER VI

SIENA AND THE PALIO

ONE summer day the Rucellais all went to Siena for the Palio. Siena is a town not far from Florence, and the Palio is a horse race that is held there each year on August sixteenth. The race is named after the "Palio," or banner, which is given to the winner.

The city of Siena is divided into seventeen *contrade*, or wards. Each ward has its own emblem, its own colors, and its own flag. There is "Lupa," the Wolf, with its colors of black and white; "Giraffa," the giraffe, with red and white; "Oca," the Goose, with red, white and green; "Aquila," the Eagle, with blue and gold; "Chiocciola," the Snail, with red, blue and yellow. When the Palio first was held, all the *contrade* had horses in the race, but lately only ten have been allowed to take part, in order that the race course should not be so crowded.



People come from all over Italy, and even from foreign countries, to see the race.

All that day the Rucellais wandered about the streets. If a car or a team of oxen came along, people had to flatten themselves against the houses to let it go past. There are no sidewalks in Siena, and there were so many people that no one could hurry even if he wanted to. If an automobile met an ox-cart, it often had to back till it found a place wide enough to let the ox-cart go by. At meal times it was hard to get anything to eat, because although all the restaurants were serving meals as fast as they could, there were more people to feed than Siena ever saw at any other time.

The next day was the day of the race. The Rucellais had decided that they wanted the Oca to win. Naturally, the Siennese support the contrada in which they happen to live, but the visitors are not particularly interested in any contrada, and are likely to choose the Oca, because it happens to have the same colors as the Italian flag.

Each of the ten race horses is taken to the

church in its own contrada and blessed before the race is run. Early the next morning, therefore, the Rucellais went to the church of the Oca. It was not very long before the horse arrived, led by a boy in a beautiful costume of the kind that people used to wear hundreds of years ago when the race first began in Siena. At first the horse did not want to go into the church, and the priest asked the people not to shout, so that it wouldn't be frightened. Finally it went all the way up to the altar where the priest poured some holy water on it. Then the boy took it out again.

Before long the crowd had begun to hurry to the race course. The Rucellais had bought seats on a wooden stand which had been put up for the event. With difficulty, the Rucellais reached their places in the stand, and soon every seat around them was taken.

Then the big bell in the Torre, the tower, began to thunder out that the race was beginning, and the people could hear a band and the drums away off.

They entered the track. Every few yards, the

drummers beat a louder tatoo; the procession stopped, and the standard bearers began to wave their flags. Always at the end they threw them up into the air, and caught them. Then the procession began again. The riders took their horses through an arch into the Torre to toss up for the positions they would take in the race.

When everything was ready, the bell stopped ringing and the riders came forth. How excited all were then, as they leaned forward to see who would have the outside and who would have the inside of the course. As they recognized the colors of the riders, the people shouted . . . "Oca!" "Giraffa!" "Lupa!" "Chiocciola!" The noise frightened the horses. They reared and plunged. It took a long time to get them in a row.

Then there was an instant's pause; a pistol shot; and they were off! Each rider had a short whip, and from the start of the race to the finish he hit his own horse, or hit at a horse or rider near him. The men held their other hand before their face for fear they should be hurt, and hit back. Their hats were lined



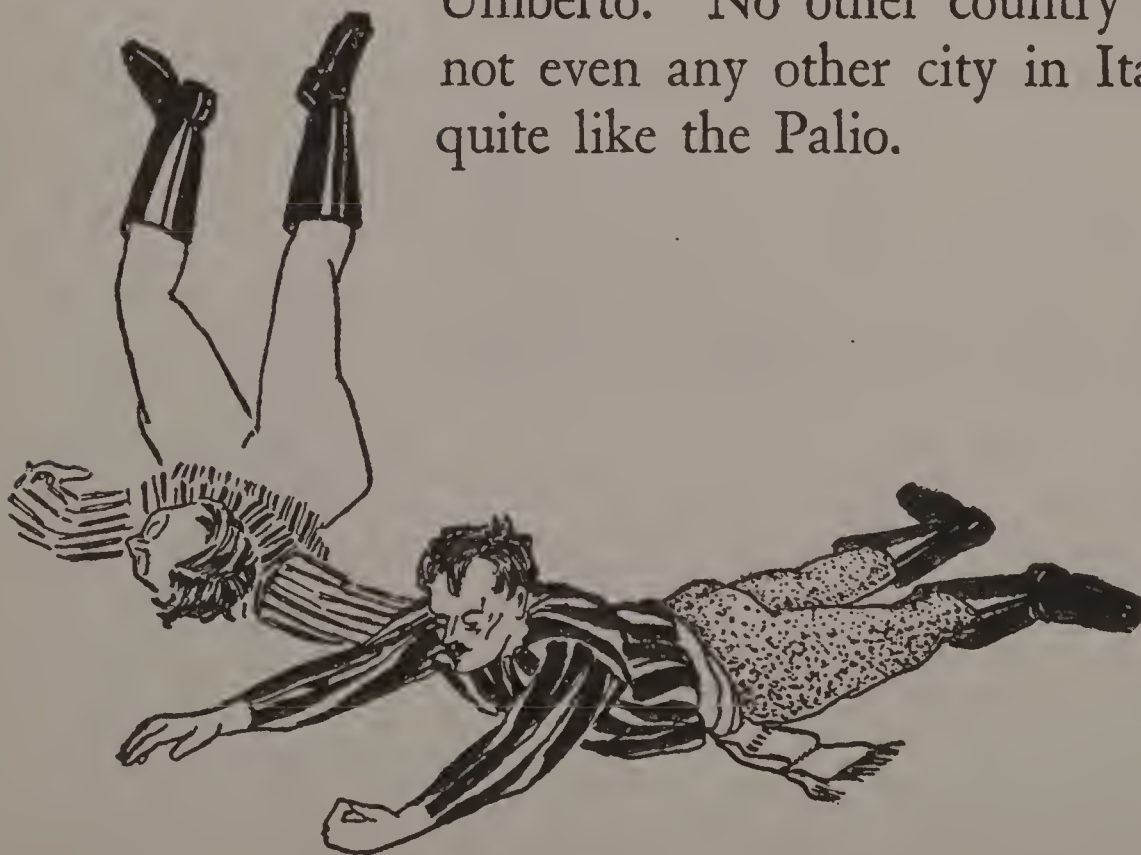
with steel, so their heads were safe. The horses, crazed with fright, dashed around taking the turns at such speed that many riders were thrown and had to roll out of the way of the oncoming racers. At one of the corners had been placed any mattresses that could be spared from the city hospital. Many a rider was hurled safely against them.

Round and round the course they went, three times. The riderless horses went on without their riders, and every now and then, another rider was thrown off. Meanwhile, the spectators let out a continual roar of noise.

"Oca is winning!" they cried. . . . "No! Lupa has it!" . . . "Go on, Giraffa!"

But Oca was winning after all, and when the race finished, he had come in first.

It has been a very wonderful holiday for Umberto. No other country in the world—not even any other city in Italy—has a festa quite like the Palio.



CHAPTER VII

SOUTHERN ITALY

ONE winter Umberto's father went for a long trip to the South of Italy.

The place to which they went first was Rome, the capital of Italy. Rome is a large city, built on seven hills on the banks of the river Tiber, another yellow river like the Arno.

Hundreds of years ago, the Romans who lived there ruled over most of the world, and the Italians are very proud of its history. Then terrible tribes of savage men came into Italy and took Rome away from the Italians. The fine buildings fell to pieces and were forgotten. Dust came down and covered some of them so that they were completely hidden, and other houses were built on top of them. Now, however, people have dug down to what used to be the streets of Rome before the dust covered them and have found the

ruins of some of the buildings which were standing thousands of years ago.

The building most people know about in Rome is the Colosseum. This is a big round structure made of stone, three stories high. Some of the stone has been carried away to make other buildings, but enough of it is left so that we can see how the Colosseum used to look. It is 615 feet long, and when it was new, it had seats for 50,000 people. Inside is a space, like an American football field, where the Romans used to hold their games.

Every time that a Roman general won a fight against his enemies, the people of Rome put up an arch of victory. Some of these are still standing. The ruins of the Forum, where they met to do business, can still be seen.

Of course Umberto was taken to see these things, but what he liked to see more than any thing else was the statue of the wolf which took care of Romulus and Remus. When they were little children, they were left alone in the woods. A wolf found them and brought them up in her cave. After Romulus grew to man-

hood he built Rome, and the Romans made a statue of the wolf with the two children and set it on a pillar. Then, years after, when Julius Caesar, one of the greatest Romans, was ruling the city, there was a terrible storm and the lightning struck the statue and cracked it. Everyone thought it meant that something dreadful would happen, and the next day Julius Caesar was killed. The statue is in a museum now, and the children could see where the lightning struck it.

Then the children were taken to see the church of Saint Peter's. It is the largest cathedral in the world and has a dome like that on the Duomo in Florence, only much bigger. When Brunelleschi's dome really didn't fall in, another great Florentine, Michael Angelo, built the still larger one on St. Peter's. The children climbed up to the roof of the church. It is so big that as many people as one might find in a small Italian town have houses on the roof. Inside the church there are marks made on the floor to show the size of the other cathedrals in the world. The second largest is in



Spain, but the next largest is in Milan, another Italian city.

The country around Rome is marshy and unhealthy. A certain kind of mosquito lives in the marshes and the people whom it stings get a fever called malaria which makes them shake all over and leaves them weak. In the winter time the whole district is covered with water. When the water goes in the summer, the plains are wonderfully green and fertile. Because of this, some people brave the danger of malaria to cultivate the land. For a long time the government has tried to drain the water from the fields, but weeds grow very quickly in the water and choke the canals which are dug to carry it off. The people keep these weeds down by a strange method. They have animals called water buffalo. In the summer these work just like oxen in the fields, but in the winter they swim about in the water, kicking and splashing and having a wonderful time. Their splashing breaks up the weeds, and when the canals are not choked, the water can drain off.

The children went through all this marshy



*Farmers near Naples drive pretty colored carts
drawn by donkeys*

country on their way down to Naples. The city is built at the end of a big bay shaped like a half moon. The people look out on the beautiful islands of Ischia and Capri, and back of them rises the volcano of Vesuvius.

The mountain of Vesuvius is shaped like a big triangle with the point knocked off. From the top, smoke rises gently to the blue sky. It is hard to believe that this beautiful mountain can do so much harm. But every now and then, it gets angry, and turns the whole harbor red from its flames. One can see how often it has thrown out ashes from the smaller mountain of ashes which rises beside it.

A few years ago the top of Vesuvius blew off. When something like this happens, it is called an eruption. Hundreds of years ago, there was a great eruption, and the mountain sent out ashes and streams of melted rock, called lava, which completely covered several towns at its foot. One of these towns has been uncovered and now we can walk along the streets of Pompeii where the rich Romans built their pleasure houses.

The streets are all clear again, and the walls of the houses are standing, but of course the roofs had fallen in with the weight of the ashes, and they have not been put on again. Umberto and his sister walked along the sidewalks made out of great blocks of lava stone which had come from Vesuvius. Bright green lizards, sunning themselves on the wall, scuttled off when they came near.

They went into some of the houses. These had been built about a square, with a garden and often a fountain in the middle. The walls were painted bright red or bright blue with pretty pictures in a band around the top. Then Umberto's father took them into the museum to show them plaster casts of people and animals that had tried to get away from the ashes when the city was buried. A little girl had tried to hold her cloak over her head; a boy who was running away had just looked back at the mountain when the ashes covered him; a dog had put his muzzle between his paws as he felt himself choking. It was sad to think that this town had been covered up in a day.



When they went back to Naples, Umberto's father was interested in the jewelry made from cameos and coral, as he wanted some for his shop in Florence. The children were more interested in finding out that the pumice stone with which Maria often took dirt from their hands, had come from Naples. It is made out of the lava which has come from Vesuvius.

The people of Naples keep goats for milk instead of cows, because goats can live very well on much less food than a cow. The milkmen in Naples do not leave a bottle of milk at each house but they came down the street with their goats. If the woman who is buying the milk wants to see her goat milked, it can climb the stairs just like a dog, and she can have it milked on her back porch.

The farmers who came into Naples drove pretty colored carts drawn by donkeys with brightly colored harnesses. The donkeys often had over their heads straw hats with holes to let their long ears stick out. Umberto's father told him that in the Island of Sicily, which is still further south and also belongs to Italy,

the carts are colored even more brightly. The wheels and shafts are lemon yellow, and the cart has pictures on its side in red, blue, green, and yellow.

Sometimes the pictures on the carts told the story of Garibaldi, whom all the Italians love, just as the Americans love George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. He was both a soldier and a sailor, and he got an army together and fought to free Italy from its enemies and make it a united nation with a king.

The Sicilians love him especially, because he took their island away from France and gave it to Italy. Garibaldi's soldiers were called the "Red Shirts." Their gay costumes make bright pictures on the sides of the Sicilian carts.



CHAPTER VIII

NORTHERN ITALY

ANOTHER time Umberto with his father and mother and Urbana visited some of the cities in northern Italy, not far from his own city of Florence.

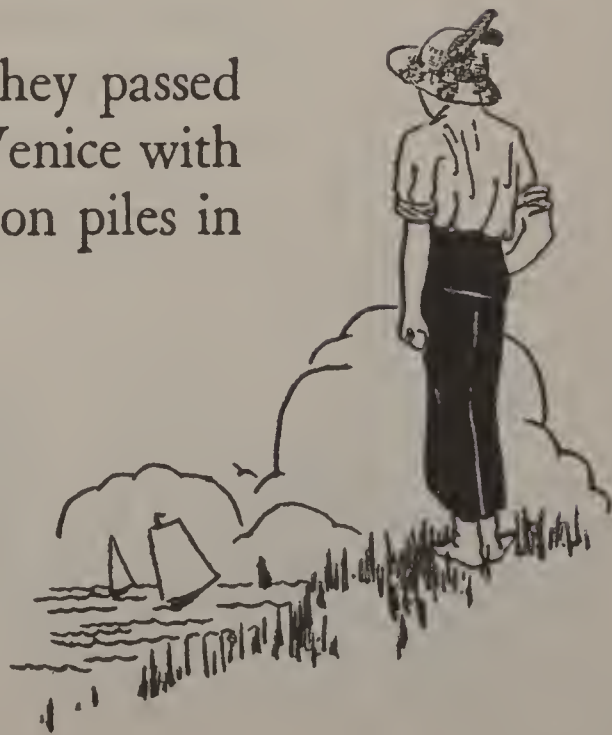
He went once to Genoa and saw the city built on the side of a steep hill rising from the sea. He thought of the little boy who, long ago, used to sit on the hill and watch the ships go out of the harbor to far away lands. This little boy would go down to the harbor and ask the sailors who came in the ships about those strange countries. When he grew up he became a sailor, too. At that time people believed that the earth was flat and that if they went too far westward, they would fall off. Columbus believed that the earth was round and that by sailing west he could come to India. People laughed at Columbus then, but now they have

put his statue facing the harbor of Genoa. He was the first to cross the Atlantic Ocean and show people that there was land west of Europe. The discovery of America prepared people to believe that the earth was really round. Naturally the Italians are very proud that this discovery was made by one of their countrymen.

In one of the squares of Genoa is the house in which Columbus lived when he was a boy. The city has kept it as a museum, for he was their greatest man.

Then Umberto went to Venice. On the way he passed through Milan and saw the beautiful white cathedral with its hundreds of marble statues, looking like a gigantic frosted cake. Here, too, his father took him to see the beautiful painting of the Last Supper with which Leonardo da Vinci had decorated the wall of the Refectory. This was the dining room of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, which means Saint Mary of Mercies.

When they went on to Venice, they passed over a long bridge which connects Venice with the mainland, for Venice was built on piles in

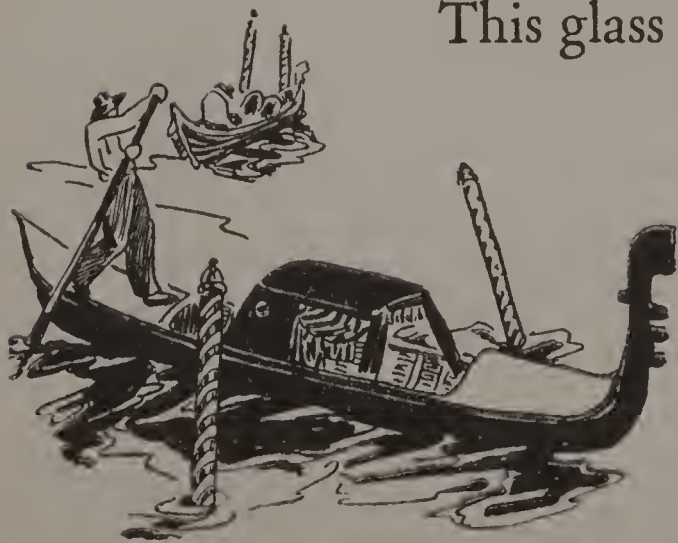


the sea. For this reason, instead of streets between the houses, there are canals of water. When the people want to come out of their houses, they go along these canals in what are called gondolas. A gondola is like a long, narrow black boat, except that the front of it rises high in the air and ends in a sharp piece of black metal. This is useful in pushing other gondolas away if they come too near. The man who rows is called a gondolier and he moves the boat forward with a long oar. The people who ride in a gondola sit on seats in the middle.

One day Umberto's father took a gondola and went out to the Island of Murano. It is here that the Venetians make the pretty glass which is sold all over the world. They were taken into a big glass factory, and there they saw the best glass blower in Murano at work.

He was standing near a big furnace which melted the glass so that he could shape it as he wanted. In order to make the glass still better to work with, the people of Murano melt some gold in with the glass.

This glass blower had two boys to help him,

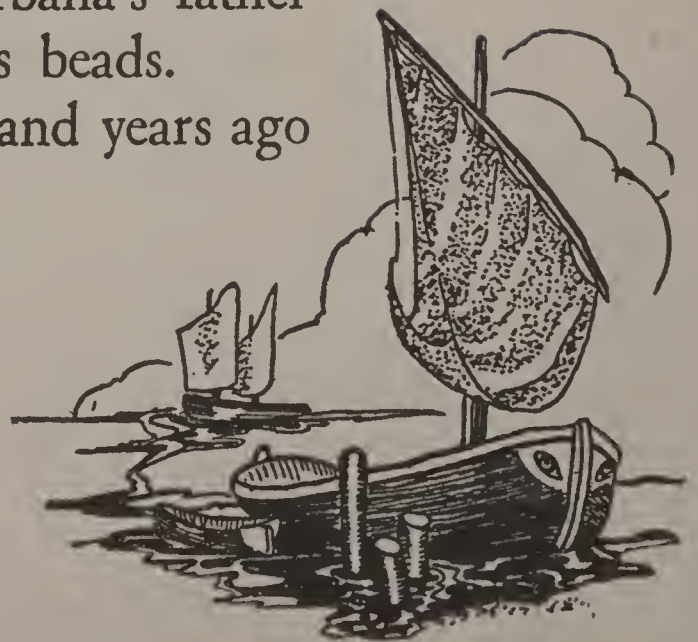


because all the work had to be done quickly while the glass was hot. The blower had a pipe in his mouth as if he were going to blow bubbles. First one of the boys laid some glass on his pipe and he blew air into it so that it curved out like the body of a swan. Then he laid down his pipe. With another instrument he pulled out one end so as to make the curved neck of the swan, and he flattened the piece at the end to make its head. Then the boys gave him glass beads to put in as eyes. After that, they gave him some more glass and he made the wings and fastened them to the sides of the swan. All this was done in a very few minutes.

As soon as the swan was finished, one boy laid it on a table beside those he had already made; the other laid some more glass on the pipe to use in making another.

In the factory they saw beautiful goblets and pitchers made of white and colored glass. Some were shaped like birds with outspread wings, or fishes with twisted tails. Urbana's father bought her some beautiful glass beads.

Venice is on the Adriatic sea, and years ago



she was famous as a sea-going nation. Her boats traded in all the ports of the world, and her citizens became very rich. The ruler of the city in those days was called a Doge. Every year, the Doge and the senators used to go in solemn procession to the sea and throw in a golden ring. Their city, they said, was married to the Adriatic; no other city should rule the sea.

Venice is not a busy city any more, but people go there because it is so beautiful. It is pretty to see the gondolas slipping down the grand canal. Often at night, a gondola lies out in the water all lit up with colored lanterns, with people singing and playing in the moonlight. Then other gondolas come out and lie near, listening to the music. Away across the water, one can see the Doge's Palace, and the pillar with the winged lion which is the emblem of the city.

There is one square in the city which is like a great open-air living room. It lies in front of the beautiful cathedral of St. Mark. Outside as well as inside this cathedral are brightly colored pictures made out of thousands of little stones. This kind of work is called mosaic, and



Venice is famous for it. People from all over the world come to see these mosaics.

On one side of St. Mark's is a tower which one can climb to get a view over the city. About thirty years ago, the tower fell down directly across the square. Fortunately, no one was hurt, and now the Italians have built it again just as it was before. On the other side of the square is a building which is called the Mercato Vecchio, or old market. On the top of this building is a very marvelous clock. The face of the clock is near the roof of the building, and above it are the figures of two men, standing on each side of a big iron bell. Exactly at twelve o'clock, these men strike the bell twelve times so that it rings out all over the square. There are always many people in the square, and at twelve o'clock they all suddenly become still and look up, waiting for the clock to strike.

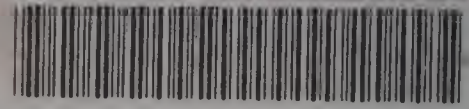
But the thing that Umberto and his sister liked best to do in Venice was to feed the pigeons. Hundreds of pigeons live around St. Marks. They are never disturbed, so they are

very tame. Umberto and his sister used to buy corn from the people who were selling it in the square. They would put some on their shoulders and hold some out on their hands. If they kept still enough, the pigeons would settle on their arms and heads to peck the grain. Urbana held grains of corn in her mouth, and the pigeons pecked at her lips as though they were kissing her.



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